

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Mark R. Warner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Governor

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GOVERNOR WARNER ANNOUNCES NEW INITIATIVES

TO ADDRESS CRITICAL HOUSING

AND COMMUNITY NEEDS

~New programs to finance critical projects and address special housing needs~

NORFOLK - Governor Mark R. Warner today announced new initiatives to combat chronic homelessness, create a community development bank, and create more affordable, accessible housing for senior citizens and persons with disabilities in Virginia. The Governor made his comments to more than 700 of Virginia's affordable housing advocates, providers, and policy makers during his keynote address at the 2004 Governor's Housing Conference in Norfolk.

"Safe and affordable housing is the bedrock of successful communities," said Governor Warner. "These new initiatives represent funding, innovation, and support that will help us meet some of our greatest housing and community development challenges."

Details of the Governor's announcements are as follows:

- **The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development will provide \$1,000,000 in federal HOME funds over the next two years to launch a pilot program to address chronic homelessness.** Last year, Virginia's shelters denied more than 50,000 requests for emergency shelter due to lack of space and resources. HOME funds, awarded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, are distributed through the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). The funds will be awarded to **Total Action Against Poverty in Roanoke, Waynesboro Redevelopment and Housing Authority, and Piedmont**

Community Services in Martinsville. Each organization will implement a local Housing First model, which provides stable shelter for chronic homeless persons in order to treat their mental and physical illnesses and lead them to self-sufficiency. The Department of Rehabilitative Services will contribute \$75,000 to the pilot program.

- **The Warner administration will create a community development bank in Virginia.** The bank will serve as a reliable source of financing for projects that address critical community needs but are unable to secure financing through traditional means. The bank will also provide gap financing to ensure that crucial projects are able to get started. The Governor and Secretary of Commerce and Trade Michael J. Schewel are working with private and public organizations to identify options for the bank's initial capitalization.

- **The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development will grant \$350,000 to the Assistive Technology Loan Fund Authority to make housing accessibility improvements for low-income senior citizens and persons with disabilities in Southwest Virginia.**

- **The Virginia Housing Registry will be unveiled at the Conference.** Starting today, Virginians in need of accessible housing for the disabled can go to www.accessva.org to find listings of available accessible rental housing in Virginia. The Housing Registry is an initiative of the Virginia Housing Development Authority, the Department of Rehabilitative Services, and the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities.

“Our administration is committed to forming unique partnerships and developing new strategies to meet Virginia’s broad spectrum of housing needs,” said Secretary of Commerce and Trade Mike Schewel. “We will continue to leverage our available public and private resources to improve housing and the quality of life in Virginia’s communities.”

The Governor’s Housing Conference is Virginia’s largest and most comprehensive affordable housing event of the year. *Opening Doors: Building a Better Future* is this year’s Conference theme. The three-day event will feature workshops and sessions designed to help public and private sector representatives develop effective housing solutions in Virginia.

Several state and federal agencies partnered to host the Governor’s Housing Conference including the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, Virginia Housing Development Authority, Virginia Housing Commission, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development - Richmond Field Office, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture - Rural Development.

For more information about the Conference go to www.dhcd.virginia.gov.